

HGTV HOST SUZANNE WHANG SPEAKS AT CLIENT COALITION MEETING

By Kimberli Washington, Public Information Office



The Los Angeles County Client Coalition (LACCC) and Asian Client Coalition held their monthly meeting on Friday, January 23, 2015, in the LACDMH headquarters second floor conference room. The featured guest speaker was television personality Suzanne Whang, who spoke on the topic of “Coping & Surviving Breast Cancer,” her personal journey with mental health while coping with eight years of breast cancer. Suzanne is an actress and comedian, best known as being the host of HGTV’s “House Hunters” for almost a decade. She has a B.A. in Psychology from Yale University, a Master’s degree in Cognitive Psychology from Brown University and is a stage four breast cancer “thrivor.”

“I don’t like to call myself a survivor because it makes it seems like I’m hanging on to something. I’m a thriver,” said Suzanne Whang.

Suzanne spoke with the group about her family history, specifically how her grandfather influenced her life and helped her to become a comedian. She also opened up about her cancer diagnosis, jokingly calling herself an “over-achiever, always trying to outdo others,” referencing a reoccurrence of the disease three times within a four year period. Suzanne described how, at first, a lump was removed, and then went into detail about how the cancer affected her emotionally.

Susan’s tumor grew from the size of a quarter to the size of a grapefruit—she was in excruciating pain and unable to sleep for months. “The pain and insomnia was making me insane,” said Suzanne. One night while looking for gauze to treat her tumor at home, she snapped and started breaking things from the emotional stress of having cancer and the abandoning effect it was having on personal relationships.

She decided at that moment she wanted to kill herself and started thinking of different ways to do it. After contemplating the different outcomes of each proposed suicide, she exhausted herself and decided to go to bed. The next morning when she woke up from a night of much needed rest, Suzanne realized she wanted to live and was happy to be alive.

Suzanne talked about her third diagnosis; through a back injury, she found out that cancer had spread throughout her body. She decided to “come out of the cancer closet,” in 2011 and share what she had been going through. After revealing her cancer secret, her health got better. Suzanne realized who her real friends were. Although she had gone into debt paying for treatment not covered by insurance, she started receiving financial support from friends, loved ones and even fans. Suzanne said that she used to wake up sad because of the cancer, but now wakes up happy because she *is* happy.

Suzanne is now completely cancer-free and writing a book about her miraculous journey back to health. She is currently starring in a sitcom called “From Here On Out,” on Here TV. To learn more about Suzanne, go to www.suzannehang.com.